

A NEW SPECIES OF *Thelcticopis* KARSCH, 1884 (ARANEAE: SPARASSIDAE: SPARIANTHINAE) FROM THE 'KANS' OF KARNATAKA, INDIA.

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ABSTRACT

A new species of sparianthine sparassid, *Thelcticopis kirankhalapi* sp. nov. is described from the 'kans' forest of Hosanagara taluk, Shivamogga, in Karnataka, India.

Key Words: Sparassidae, Sparianthinae, *Thelcticopis*, India, Karnataka, Shivamogga, nouveau taxon, taxonomy, natural history.

INTRODUCTION

The Huntsman spiders, or the Sparassidae Bertkau, 1872 constitute a large family of usually cryptic, mid to large sized ambush hunters, known to exploit a wide variety of ecological niches globally, ranging from tropical rainforests to xeric sand dunes (Moradmand & Jäger, 2011).

Partaking the occasional mammalian vertebrate prey, in the form of microchiropteran bats (Nyffeler & Knörnschild, 2013; Bhattacharya, 1941), the family is represented in India by 12 genera and 98 species, 9 of which have hitherto comprised the genus *Thelcticopis* (WSC, 2015; Keswani, 2012), defined by the following traits: prosoma longer than broad, longitudinally convex; posterior row of eyes procurved, lateral eyes sessile; anterior medians larger than anterior laterals; legs short, relatively less latrigrade, leg I longer than or equal to leg II; anterior tibiae with 5-7 pairs of ventral spines; spinnerets supported in a membranous stalk, strengthened by a hairy, chitinous ring (Tikader & Sethi, 1990; Dyal, 1935; Pocock, 1900).

The present report describes a new species of *Thelcticopis* from Shivamogga, Karnataka, India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Holotype female visually detected and hand collected, during a series of nocturnal surveys conducted to document the Araneae of the ‘Kans’ of Hosanagara taluka, Shivamogga district, Karnataka; specialized forest lands harboring unique microclimatic conditions, consisting of evergreen and semi-evergreen vegetation, surrounded by otherwise deciduous forests (Hemanjali *et. al.*, 2015).

Specimen photographed *in-situ* with a Nikon D7200 DSLR, utilizing a 50mm Yashica lens, reversed with extension tubes, and a Vivitar electronic flash paired with a homemade diffuser; subsequently euthanized and preserved in 80% ethanol.

Female genitalia excised, cleared and examined under a stereo zoom microscope; measurements provided are in mm and were taken using a digital caliper; leg measurements are provided as follows: Total (femur, patella, tibia, metatarsus, tarsus).

Terminology used follows Liu, Li & Jäger, 2010. Type material examined and deposited in the repository of the Forest Training Institute, Chikhaldara, Amravati.

Taxonomy

***Thelcticopis* Karsch, 1884**

***Thelcticopis kirankhalapi* sp. nov.**

(Figures 1-4)

Type Specimen

Holotype female, Hosanagara taluka, Shivamogga district, Karnataka. 13.92°N 75.07°E, 18.x.2015. Sumukha J. N.

Etymology

The specific name is respectfully dedicated in honor of Mr. Kiran Khalap, Managing Director & co-founder of Chlorophyll Brand and Communications Consultancy; critically acclaimed author, rock climbing and bouldering aficionado; connoisseur of the arts and sciences, patron of conservation initiatives, in appreciation and gratitude.

Diagnosis

Thelcticopis kirankhalapi sp. nov. can be distinguished from all congeners by a combination of the following characters, namely median septum wide, arched, tongue shaped; centrally ridged, with a curved anterior rim. Lateral lobes fused. Copulatory ducts distinct, short, originating from antero-median copulatory openings. Spermathecae oblong, narrowly spaced; rounded proximally, widened medially, narrowing distally, with short, thick, curved fertilization ducts located terminally (Figure - 4).

Epigyne somewhat similar to *Thelcticopis canescens* Simon, 1887 and *Thelcticopis zhengi* Liu, Li & Jäger, 2010, but differs from the former in the median septum being tongue shaped, with a curved anterior rim, as opposed to narrow, mesially constricted, with a domed rim.

Median septum in the latter sub-circular, with a straight, transverse rim; lateral lobes non-fused; free, distinct, bearing hooks at the posterior margin. Spermathecae widely separated, structurally different; position and shape of copulatory ducts dissimilar.

Habitus, habits, coloration and markings widely disparate.

Description



Figure -1, *Thelcticopis kirankhalapi* sp. nov. (Dorsal View)



Figure - 2, *Thelcticopis kirankhalapi* sp. nov. (Anterior View)



Figure - 3, *Thelcticopis kirankhalapi* sp. nov. (Lateral view)

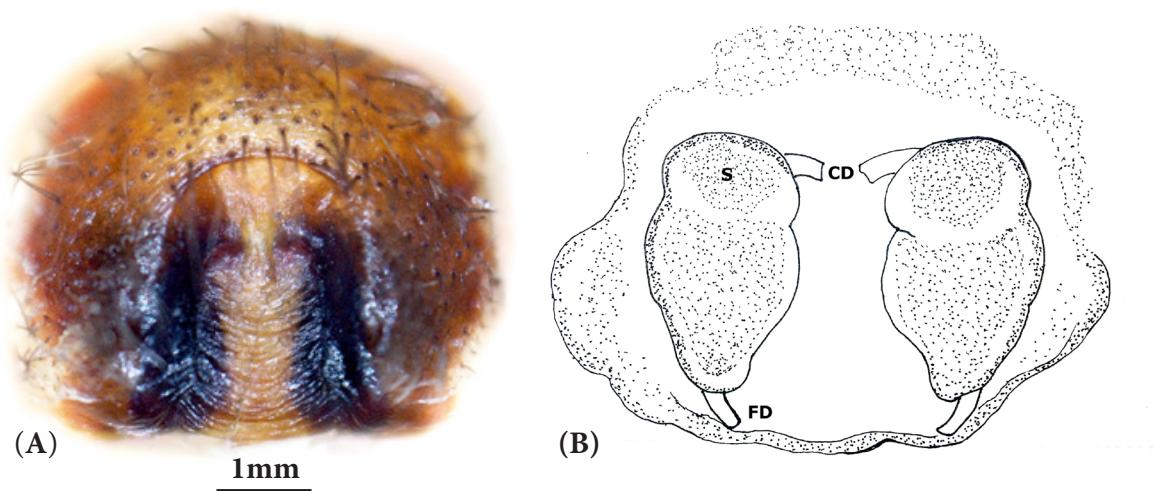


Figure - 4, *Thelcticopis kirankhalapi* sp. nov.
Epigyne - Ventral view (A) and Dorsal view(B);
CD - Copulatory duct, S - Spermatheca, FD - Fertilization duct

Female (Holotype): Prosoma 7.40mm long, 5.42mm wide. Opisthosoma 8.08mm long, 5.17mm wide. Leg formula I-IV-II-III. Leg measurements: I 20.05 (5.90, 3.07, 5.62, 4:26, 1.20), II 19.13 (5:85, 3:01, 4.99, 4:00, 1.28), III 15.53 (4:86, 2:58, 3:72, 3:16, 1:21), IV 19.99 (5:95, 2:46, 4.83, 5:30, 1.45).

Prosoma orange-brown, convex, with a short, longitudinal, shallow fovea. Chelicerae hirsute; a deep wine red, distinctly lighter and bald, proximally. Opisthosoma a dull, dark coffee-brown, with a series of lighter orange-brown markings forming a distinct chevron pattern; venter pale. Legs dull orange-brown, femur unmarked, a pair of diffused, dorsal dark-brown longitudinal lines running from the patella to the tarsus. Venter of tibia I with a pair of distinctive, seven, stiff spines. Underside of the meta-tarsus and tarsus densely covered in fine, bright white pubescence. Meta-tarsus with a distinct, black ventral streak, proximally rounded, narrowing to a thin point distally.

Epigyne as in diagnosis. Male unknown.

Distribution

Presently known only from a small patch of 'Kans' forest in Hosanagara taluka, Shivamogga district, Karnataka.

Natural History

A mid-sized, foliage dwelling, presumably nocturnal, orange-brown, ambush hunting sparassid.

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